

S 1070



THE
ICE-BOUND SHIP,

AND

THE DREAM;

BY W. H.

MONTREAL:

PRINTED BY HENRY ROSE, 51, ST. FRANCOIS XAVIER STREET.

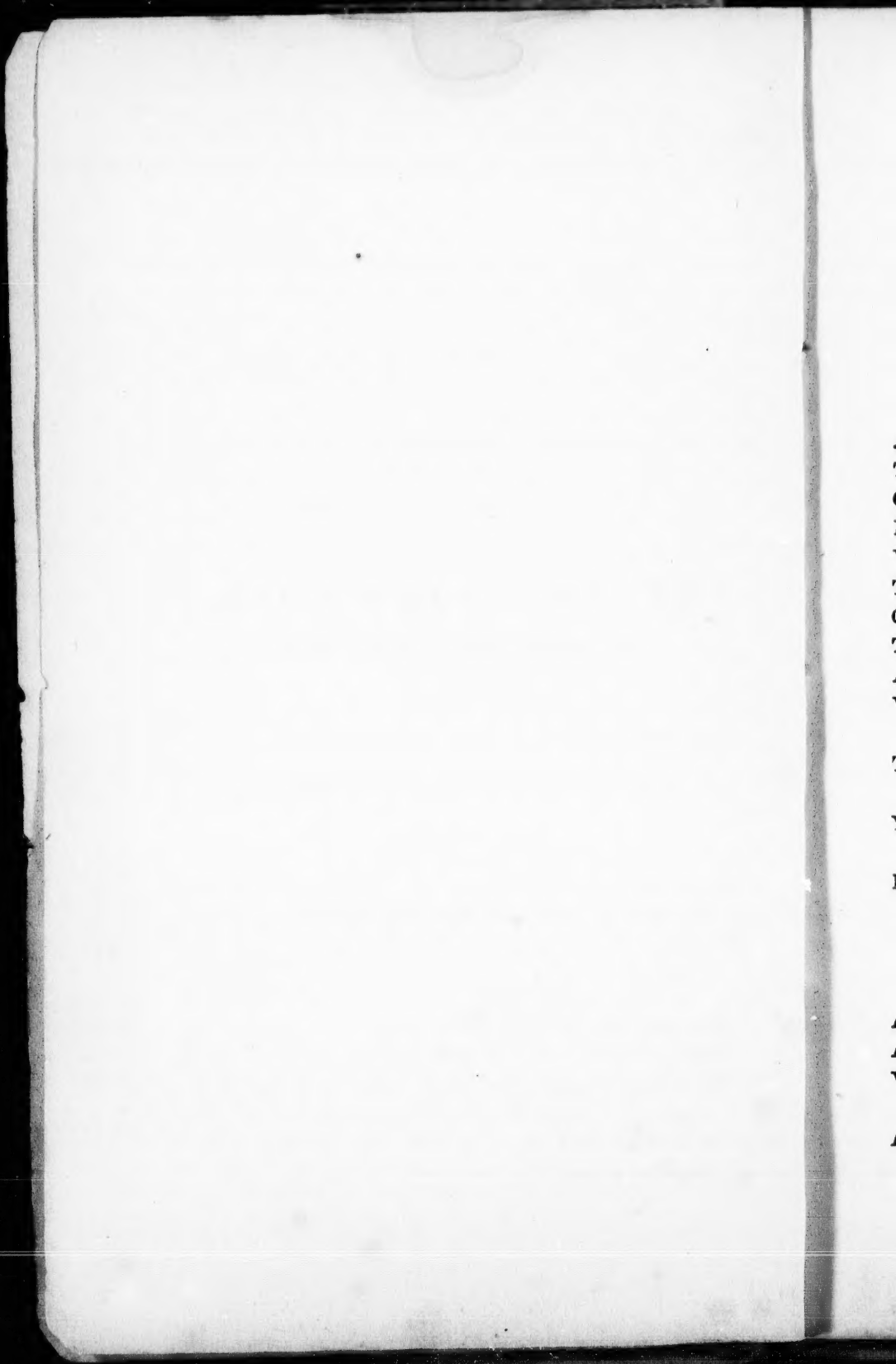
1840.



TO
THE HON. JOHN ROSE,
CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC WORKS,
FOR CANADA,

AS AN HUMBLE EXPRESSION OF THANKS FOR THE MANY KINDNESSES RE-
CEIVED FROM HIM, THIS WORK IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.



THE ICE-BOUND SHIP.

I.

AWAY! away! o'er the waters blue,
The good ship sped with a gallant crew
Of hearts—brave hearts that never would quail,
Mid thunder's crash, or the tempest's gale,
When borne on its wings in angry flight,
The storm-king rode in his fiercest might,
O'er the towering waves with their hissing surge,
That shrieked, as he passed, their ocean dirge :
And many a one they left on shore,
Whose dearest prayers with them they bore,
And whose hearts were ever fondly turning
To those that in life they might see no more,
Who, perhaps, too, for them were that moment yearning;
Yes, we had those, who, when evening's star
Glanced over the deep with silvery sheen,
Mingled their spirits with those afar,
Though seas rolled darkly and deep between.

II.

Away we sped with the fav'ring blast,
And many a fairy isle we passed,
Whose fruitful groves and shining trees,
Gleamed beauteous 'neath unclouded skies,
And from the deep blue of the seas
Rose like some mimic Paradise :

So still—so bright with all the hues
 That vernal summer's breath diffuse ;
 So pure, it seemed that on such earth,
 Sin's darker stain could ne'er have birth ;—
 And, oh ! how often have I thought,
 How sweet 'twould be, unsought, unfound,
 To dwell in some such heavenly spot,
 With only those I loved around.

III.

But soon we left behind those isles,
 Where balmy summer ceaseless smiles ;
 Those gentle waves whose sapphire wreath
 Shines o'er the coral's red beneath,
 And where the breeze at evening roves,
 And wantons o'er their placid face,
 Fraught with the fragrance of the groves,
 Of scented trees those Isles that grace,
 And sailed by more than one dark coast,
 Bleak, rugged, wild and tempest tossed ;
 Where, beating on the treacherous shore,
 The waves resound with dismal roar :—
 Their dreadful hoarseness fear would stir
 In breast of boldest mariner ;
 And gladly he his bark would turn
 From such inhospitable bourne.

IV.

We tacked and sailed day after day,
 From coast or land-mark far away ;
 We'd left the last of human kind,

Full many a stormy league behind :
 E'en those ill omened birds* whose home—
 Borne ever on untiring wing—
 Is o'er the quivering billow's foam,
 And joyous most when tempests sing,
 Had gone from us, and ceased to dip
 Their feathery pinions in the blue
 Of ocean's breast, as round our ship,
 In wheeling circles oft they flew :
 And we had passed, some days before,
 The last of those that love of gain
 Had brought from a far, smiling shore
 To this ungenial, stormy main ;
 And, save some monster of the deep,
 That o'er its face would wildly sweep
 In solitary flight ;
 Or distantly in its broad home,
 In sportive fierceness was with foam
 The chill brine lashing white,
 We nought of living saw or heard ;
 We'd sped beyond the flight of bird,
 And though, perchance, there might have been
 Some of those beasts with milky hide,
 Fierce and untamed, yet none were seen
 Throughout that dreary icy void—
 Yes, all companionship was gone,
 And onward we pursued alone
 Our solitary track,

* The stormy Petrel, in consequence of its being seldom near the shore, is supposed by unsophisticated seamen, to live entirely on the wing, and is, under certain circumstances, regarded by them as a bird of ill omen.

To where the needle's quivering end,
 Its poised course would ever tend
 Nor thought of turning back.

v.

We now were in the farthest sea
 Of that chill clime, and silently
 Our still unswerving course we kept,
 And wondered how ; for nature slept,
 Or seemed to sleep, as scarce a breeze
 Disturbed the tranquil of the seas.
 And many an iceberg towering high,
 Majestic, huge,—swept grandly by,
 Whilst we gazed on with speechless awe,
 As floating near distinctly saw
 Its hundred crags against the sky,
 Abruptly sharp, flash glitteringly ;
 And rood on rood above the mast,
 Frown on the pigmy thing it passed
 With stern contempt, as if we were
 Too mean its passing glance to share —
 I've seen the mounts of earth that freeze
 Their peaks in air, and changeless stand ;
 But gazed not as I gazed on these,
 So awful — so sublimely grand,
 As moving slowly by they traced
 Their stately course along the tide :—
 The silent monarchs of that waste,
 They seemed its liquid breast to glide :
 And their companionship, bleak — rude,

Increased the dreary solitude
 That reigned throughout that icy zone:
 And as alternately we bore
 Each other past, we felt it more
 Than if we'd sailed the deep alone.

VI.

At last a calm around us fell,
 And on the water's face we lay,
 With sleeping sails, immoveable,
 The helm untouched day after day:
 I well remember how 't did seem,
 The strange creation of a dream,
 From which I thought to wake and find,
 All some delusion of the mind —
 But no:—around us far away
 The Icebergs in the distance lay;
 Still as ourselves, their huge expanse
 Sunk into insignificance:
 It seemed by one consent they'd flown
 And left us to the deep alone;
 That deep, with waves in awful rest,
 Shone one unbroken glassy breast —
 A mirror vast where could unchecked,
 The universe itself reflect —
 And its cold surface took the hue
 Of the far sky's empyrean blue,
 And seemed, (the last so deep enshrined,)
 Both elements as one combined;
 And but for the slight circling swell

Made by some huge fish sportively,
 So like they were, we could not tell
 Where wave began, or ended sky.
 Away behind us shone the sun,
 His semi-yearly course nigh run.
 Just where the far horizon's verge
 Was lost behind the sleeping surge,
 He slowly dipped, and round him shed
 His light, a subdued fiery red,
 Lighting the surface of the brine,
 Far from the place of his decline :
 The scene, with his slow parting ray,
 Resembled the last hues of day
 In warmer climes, the upward light
 Receding gradually till blending,
 Amidst the deepning hues of night
 With shadowy wings on earth descending.
 But of the dreary features there,
 The icy chillness of the air
 Was far the worst — Oh ! how intense
 That cold ! it deadened every sense
 And scarcely left us nerve to feel
 The dreadful keenness of its chill.
 Above — around — unchanging clear,
 Was spread the still, crisp atmosphere,
 And through it myriad gems of frost,
 In shining course each other crossed ;
 Now dark awhile, then flashing bright
 As oft they caught in their slow flight
 The far sun's half extinguished light.—
 It was that steady—piercing cold,
 T' encounter which the breast most bold —

Accustomed to the keenest air
Of Greenland's seas, would hardly dare :
Oh had the gale from its long rest,

But woke and swept the glassy main,
And curled the sleeping billow's crest

With foam, 'twould have been welcomed then —
That still, unearthly cold was more
A dread than rudest tempest's roar.

VII.

We now a seeming age had lain
Upon that sleeping, glassy main ;
How long the time we could not tell,

We had no means to count the hours ;
But slow it passed amidst the swell

Of anxious thoughts that then were ours :
Besides, the sun had sunk below

The horizontal line serene ;
While in the sky a faint bright glow
Still told where he so late had been,

And night—uninterrupted night,—
With all its stars unchanging bright,

Had slowly fallen upon the scene.
Yet through the night the eye could trace
For many a mile, the water's face ;
And sweeping the horizon's bound,

Dim and afar, we could not see
One of those icy towers around

That lately filled that silent sea :
But in their place, on either side
A thin white belt upon the tide

Far, far away appeared ;

And many an hour we watched its slow
Increase, and broad and broader grow,

Until at last our bark it neared.—

God ! what a sight then met our eyes —

Two moving continents of ice,
Together by attraction brought,
With sure destruction to us fraught,

Moved on the deep's serene,
With course slow and continuous —
We felt it far too swift for us —
Towards each other's dreary shore
With one vast snow-sheet covered o'er,

And our ill-fated bark between.

I'll not forget the mute despair

That settled on each livid cheek,
The eyes' wild, agonizing stare

That told all that we feared to speak ;
While seemed the chill lips' silent quiver
To bid farewell to earth forever :—

But 'twas not then our dreadful doom
That ocean's wave should be our tomb.

VIII.

Near and more near together drove

Those icy plains, drear, wide and chill ;
But, oh, so slowly did they move,

They ever seemed remaining still :
Yet less and less became the space,
Betwixt them, on the ocean's face ;
And what to us appeared before
One long and even line of shore,

Now showed a broken jagged coast,
 Indented deep with many a bay,
 Formed by the art unguided frost
 Combined with ocean's dashing spray.
 At length together with a crash,
 That bellowing rose from sea to sky,
 Then vanished in infinity,
 Louder than that which wakes the flash,
 (Cleaving the tempest's clouds on high,)
 Of forked flame,
 Those deserts came,
 But spared us in our agony;
 For swept within an icy bay,
 That moment saved, secure we lay,
 And trembled at the fearful sound
 Of strife that filled the air around.

IX.

But brief the season of our prayer
 Of gratitude to Providence;
 For our dread situation there,
 Recurred with pangs tenfold intense —
 "Saved! Saved!" glad words, we'd scarcely cried,
 When, impious thought, we wished the tide,
 Now life-like with the rippling wave,
 Had darkly then become our grave;
 And inly blamed the unseen power
 That spared us in that fearful hour,
 To suffer the long lingering fate,
 That seemed upon us to await;

For when each endless glacier's shore
 The other touched upon the main,
 They were, by wavelets sweeping o'er,
 Congealed, and parted not again ;
 And soon our ice-girt bay the same
 As the encircling mass became.
 And there we lay with ice all round,
 That reached the dim horizon's bound —
 Which way soe'er we turned, the eye
 Encountered nought but ice and sky —
 A sky above us strangely dark,
 Around, an icy desert stark :
 The level void seemed infinite,
 A vast expanse of gleaming white —
 A dreary, wild, unbroken waste,
 And we within its centre placed.
 The horrors of that wilderness,
 I cannot find the words to tell —
 To paint that awful emptiness,
 So strange — incomprehensible.

x.

All hope was gone—to God on high
 We mutely prayed, prepared to die —
 But such a death — such awful fate
 Was torture's height to contemplate —
 To perish midst that solitude,
 From friends we ne'er would meet again,
 Who oft o'er ocean's briny flood
 Would gaze for our return in vain.—
 I would not wish that dread suspense

'Twixt life and death — its pangs intense —
 Befall even the bitterest foe
 Who'd wrought me deep and lasting woe —
 We'd turn each from his fellow's face,
 For when the starlight on it shone,
 Too well we knew we each could trace
 Thereon the anguish of his own :
 And when we to each other spake
 The accents of our deep despair,
 We whispered low — afraid to break
 The dreadful silence reigning there.

XI.

I'll not recount the unnumbered hours
 Of wretchedness that then were ours,—
 Beyond the reach of human aid,
 With Heaven against us, too, arrayed :
 What anguish keen we felt in thought
 Worse than e'er living flesh endured
 With nerves to pain intensely wrought,
 By all that torture's art procured.—
 I'll pass the space of many a day,
 Firm as the rocky mountain's base,
 That we unmoved and silent lay,
 Within that icy waste's embrace,
 And tell of those last horrors there
 'Twas mine to witness and to share.

XII.

The blast blew cold
 And it wildly howled,
 Uncurbed in its angry haste,

And to and fro
 It drifted the snow
 In clouds o'er that empty waste.
 It drifted the snow and it rattled the mast —
 We quailed 'neath it shiveringly ;
 But with demon laugh it shrieked as it passed
 And mocked at our misery :
 On the deck we cowered, we could not go
 To the wished for shade of the hold below ;
 For the frost had shrank
 Each oaken plank,
 And the sea rushed gurgling through
 The parted seams,
 And swelled to the beams
 Of the deck as it solid grew.
 But brief was the time that our strength could bear
 To battle the keenness of the air
 And that fearful gale,
 With its howl and wail,
 As it swept the wide waste o'er,
 And wound its grasp
 With icy clasp
 Round the forms that there did cower,
 My ship-mates froze
 Hard — cold — their woes
 All o'er — life fled without a gasp:—
 It iced the blood
 As they sat or stood,
 It stilled the lips in their quiver—
 It fixed the eye
 Ere the lids could lie
 Closed on its parting glance forever.

XIII.

Tw'as some kind Providential power
 Sustained me in that dismal hour,
 And lent my nerves the strength — the will
 To bid defiance to the chill
 Of that fierce blast in rude career,
 And petrifying atmosphere.

• • • • •
 I stript from the mast the jibing sail,
 And made 'neath the bulwarks' lee
 A screen around which the furious gale
 Beat fitful, but harmlessly ;
 And I had the shreds that the dead once wore ;
 They lent me a warmthful glow ;
 I ate of the last of our hardened store
 And for drink I sucked the snow,
 And there through that seemingly endless night
 I lay till the blast had spent its might.

XIV.

The sky above again was clear,
 Save where before the nigh spent gale,
 The thin scud crept in light career,
 The unfamiliar stars winked pale :
 And there, upon that awful waste,
 Where man before had never traced,
 Save in imagining,
 A path or course — with hope all flown

Was I left desolate—alone,
 The only living thing,—
 And here and there
 Around me were
 Those stark and icy dead
 In postures still the same as when
 Life stopped within the chilling vein
 And their numbed spirits fled :
 While now and then the dying blast
 Moaned frightful round the creaking mast,
 Or swelled into a shriek,
 Whene'er it sped more wildly past
 And bent the quivering peak.
 Away, beyond, shone coldly bright
 The gleaming Borealis' light ;
 (It did not seem to me more near
 Than when beheld from warmer sphere)
 And in its ever changing bow,
 Fantastic shapes would come and go —
 Strange creatures that were thither brought
 By my o'erstrained, disordered thought.
 And I beheld their uncouth eyes
 Glare on mine own with fixed surprise,
 As if they wondered why alone,
 In that inhospitable zone
 I lingered, an intruder rare
 Upon their realms of ice and air—
 Appearing only midst those rays
 To bend on me their wondering gaze—
 Distorted, wild, they met the eye—
 A moment lived, then flitted by.
 'Twas dreadful, too, that flickering glare

Illumining the chilly air :
 Two moments scarce its yellow flame
 Continuing to glow the same ;
 And far along the sparkling snow,
 Wild shadows of the ship 'twould throw,
 That danced upon the surface white,
 As often changed the spectral light.—
 But on the deck — 'twas sad the scene
 With that light overhead ;
 For 'neath it shone a glassy green,
 The fixed eyes of the dead ;
 And yet so life-like was that stare,
 Unchanging, on the vacant air,
 From some that sat, or, leaning, stood
 Where rose support, one scarcely could
 Believe their spirits fled.
 And I was there all, all alone,
 With nought but darkness—silence round,
 Save when the low gale's fitful moan,
 It broke with ever wailing tone,
 As 't through the frozen cordage wound.
 Alone, alone !—I could not flee
 From thought—of every other rest,
 Thought—thought oppressive was to me
 The sad companion I had left.
 I labored anxiously to shun
 The agony with which 'twas fraught—
 Alas ! how vain ; for striving on,
 Intenser pangs it only brought—
 I dared not cry aloud—I feared,
 And started at the slightest noise ;
 For every trifling sound I heard,

Echoed to me a spirit voice.
 Hour after hour dragged slowly by—
 I paced the deck with fearful tread,
 Alternate gazing on the sky
 And fixed eyes of the frozen dead.

xv.

Slow, slow those darkened hours dragged by :
 It seemed as though they'd never end :
 And hoping still, I longed to die —
 Death would have been a welcome friend :
 And yet to pass away unknown,
 To sink unheeded and alone ;
 No kindred's soothing hand to close
 The filming eyes in last repose ;
 To know no sympathetic gaze
 Beheld our life's expiring rays —
 To see no more the smiling earth
 Bright with the sun, and summer flowers—
 To share no more the happy mirth
 Of human kind mid pleasure's hours—
 To bid eternal farewell to
 Those scenes that eyes we love illumine
 With mild affection's gentle glow,
 And that for such a dreadful tomb—
 'Twas agony's intensity,
 Worse, worse than death itself could be.

xvi.

Again the gale in wildest flight
 Swept o'er the snow's untarnished white ;

But not so keenly breathed it now —
 It came with a much milder glow
 Than 't did before — yet with dulled sense
 I sank beneath its influence —
 I laid me down as in a dream,—
 I saw the stars above me gleam —
 I heard, anon, a vollying roar,
 As if the ice asunder tore,—

Again, though indistinct, yet near,

It seemed to swell upon the ear —

Again — faint — low — I heard no more.

.

I woke as from some frightful trance,
 I gazed around with 'wildered glance ;—
 Within a seaman's cot I lay —
 Methought I heard the ocean's spray,
 Wild, — hoisterous, — free, — with gurgling splash
 Against a bounding vessel dash :
 I heard the murmur of the foam
 Loud bubbling in its native home,
 (And ne'er was sweeter music heard
 Than that the whistling gale then stirred
 Among the voices of the sea
 Joining their chorus joyously.)
 I thought I'd waked from my last rest,
 Amidst the regions of the blest :
 I heard some human voices round
 And started at the welcome sound :
 Anon they came and kindly poured
 Within mine ear the fervent word
 Of charity, compassionate,
 That lightens pain of half its weight ;

Such word as makes e'en bosoms rude
Swell with a fervent gratitude.

And then they told me how they saw

Far drifting on the heaving main,
Huge yet enough to inspire awe,
The fragment of an icy plain,
And in its midst a darkened speck,
The telescope proclaimed a wreck;
Then how the boat was quickly lowered,
And that untrodden wild explored,
And midst the desolation round,
How I alone was breathing found —
You know the rest — but that long night

Of terror has outspeeded time :
Behold these locks are snowy white,
Though manhood scarce has reached its prime.
And oft in midnight's stilly hour
In dreams disturbed I'll live again,
Through all their dreadful force and power,
The horrors of that icy main.

THE DREAM.



THE DREAM.

• • • • • • •
'Twas evening, purple with the last faint hues
Of slow declining day—the golden rays
That a few moments had beheld diffused
O'er all the sky, had fled the massive arch,
And in their place a shadowy crimson light
Slept on the undulations of the clouds
That hung reposingly 'twixt heaven and earth ;
And softly on the scene below descended,
The misty twilight with umbrageous wings,
Serene and beautiful—the hour that's most
Beloved by the meditative breast :—
When lone I wandered midst the silent graves
Of thousands wrapped in their last earthly sleep,
All heedless of the anxious cares, the strife,
The joys—the sorrows of the living world
From which they noiselessly had passed forever.
On all things round a melancholy tinge
Seemed strangely cast ;—the drooping willows hung
In sadness o'er the mossy mounds they long
Had watched ; and watching, venerable had grown ;
The broader leaves that trembled in the breath
Of evening's spirit-like and gentle gale,
Tapped 'gainst each other with a mournful sound
That faintly echoed thro' the stilly place—
I was alone, yet not alone in thought ;

The shrouded dead as voices from the past,
 Prompting a glimpse into futurity,
 Had tongues that whispered to the pondering soul
 A mystic language less expressed than felt.
 In melancholy and reflective mood
 I gazed upon the monumental stones,
 That, leaning, rose from out the rank green grass
 In waving clusters gathered round their base ;—
 I pondered on the vanities of life—
 The few brief hours of pleasure and of pain
 We prize so vastly, ere, alas ! we sink
 Forgotten in the confines of the tomb.
 This joyous universe, so loved,—what is it ?
 A never ending stream of life and death—
 We live to die ; and with this bitter thought
 Intruding mid the brightest scenes, but serves
 To cast a gloomy shadow o'er existence—
 Oh ! like the river of unfailing source,
 That onward rolls, unceasingly, its waves
 Towards the ocean, till within its depths
 They noiseless glide and there are lost forever :
 So rolls unceasingly the human tide
 Towards Eternity's unfathomable gulf,
 Its heedless thousands—ever pouring on
 Without obstruction to that saddest goal
 Once reached, no ebb, returning, wafts them back.

A gorgeous city in the distance lay,
 Obscurely in the gathering twilight seen ;
 Yet on its pointed spires the western light
 Still lingered with a fading glory, and
 The hum of busy multitudes upon

The evening breeze was floated to mine ear,
 But came so faintly that it might have been
 But fancy's workings in that stilly hour.
 "And there," I thought, "within that mimic world
 One glimpse would show to us the earth at large,
 The wild impulses, passions, joys and sorrows
 That dwell with frail humanity where'er
 Its temp'ral habitation may be fixed.
 Man is the same in every zone and clime—
 The same propensities and feelings mark
 The common origin, the spring of all—
 The fatal legacy to him bequeathed—
 The train of evils that it ever breeds,
 Casts over him its melancholy blight:
 The child of impulse—often borne along
 Without the curbing of reflection's rein—
 Led more by passion than by reason's force:
 Poor semblance of that great Divinity
 That raised him living from the dust of earth,—
 With still the same imperfectness of mind
 That from the offset failed to withstand
 The simple test lightly imposed upon it,
 And fell, an easy prey unto a tempter's wiles."
 What food for contemplation is there in
 The bounds prescribed by those encircling walls—
 How many a grief o'erflowing heart is there
 In sadness turning from the cares of life—
 Its dark perplexities, to dwell awhile
 With some small space of earth in this still spot—
 Its hopes, affections buried with the dust
 That darkly moulders in the narrow cell
 That memory, though with pain, yet loves to haunt.

I thought, too, of the thousands journeying through
 Its joyous scenes without a thought beyond
 The present or the vain remembrances
 Linked with the ne'er returning past—as though
 They lived for nought but to obtain a smile
 Of approbation from the tinselled crowd,
 Which, blessed with nature's, fortune's gifts, seemed all
 The aim of their weak frivolous existence,
 Nor deemed they had a soul immortal as
 The Holy One to whom it owed its birth,
 To live,—live on through ages of eternity
 In pain or bliss as themselves must decree.

Again, my gaze was turned upon the graves
 That silently in hundreds round me lay,
 And thus unto myself I seemed to speak :
 " Oh ! at that awful and terrific day,—
 The last illumined by yon sinking sphere
 Ere it and all the starry firmament
 Shall be dissolved before th' Almighty's breath ;
 When thro' the parting heavens the great Son,
 In dazzling radiance on the snowy clouds
 Descending, will be seen, engirt with all
 The Father's awful majesty and glory ;
 When space unlimited shall echo with
 The dreadful notes of the Archangel's trump,
 And yawning earth reverberating loud
 The mighty summons shall then render forth
 The dead of ages, that they there may give
 Account each of his earthly stewardship :
 Then, of those thronging multitudes, how few
 Will meet their Master with unshrinking look

And humbly say, ' behold oh gracious Lord,
 For the two talents that thou gavest me,
 I here return thee five ! ' Then, then the words
 That thundering shall proclaim the fearful doom
 Of those unprofitable who slept the time
 During the absence of their trusting Lord.
 Dread doom ! there's something awful in the thought
 That dwells upon thy dim foreshadowed pangs
 And bids us turn within our heedless selves
 And trembling ask the conscience smitten breast,—
 ' Is it to reap such harvest that I sow ? '
 Wrapped in obscurity, conjecture dares
 Scarce venture what thy mystery may be ;
 Yet fancy's wing endeavours oft, in flight
 Beyond its feeble power, to seek, and paint
 A world of torments of some monstrous shape,
 As that for the unchosen ones prepared :
 The trifling knowledge that to us is given,
 (Enough for man to know,) us will not teach
 Of that dread mystery beyond the grave."

" Oh ! for a glimpse behind the mystic veil
 That shrouds eternity from mortal view—
 One moment's glance beyond the shadowy pale
 That shuts the mortal from th' immortal world."

Vain and presumptuously, I seemed to wish.

And yet scarce was the impious wish conceived,
 When lo ! the glowing twilight scene was changed :
 I stood surrounded by a darkness terrible—
 The gloom unearthly of a spirit world ;
 I felt 'twas such ; for on our living sphere,
 Such bleak obscurity descended never :

'Th' unbroken stillness of the grave was there,
 And so oppressive to the mind became,
 That fancy, quickened by the exclusion of
 External objects to the visual sense,
 Grew pregnant with a multitude of sounds,
 Low noises murmuring confusedly,
 And indistinctly falling on the ear,
 While shapeless phantasies appeared to fill
 With spirit life the melancholy shade,
 And flashed thin phosphorescent gleams before
 The aching eyeballs to their utmost strained.

Sudden appeared, and by my side he stood,
 Distinctly visible amidst the gloom :
 (A subdued radiance that around him shone
 Him rendered palpable unto the sight,)
 One in a loose and draping garment clad,
 As purely white as the new snow from Heaven,
 Of aspect venerable, serene and mild :
 A patriarchal and flowing beard
 Gave to his face a dignity benign.
 He looked as one o'er whom a cent'ry's span
 Had winged its silent flight, and fleeting dropped
 Its hoary dews upon the stately head,
 Yet weakened not the prime of manhood's days.
 A zone or cincture girt his waist around,
 Of fainty glittering substance, and dim rays,
 Like lingerings of a dying glory, shone
 With faded brightness from its circling girth :
 I felt as in the presence of one formed
 To inspire the gazer with profoundest awe—
 Age ever carries on its time worn front

A quiet dignity that claims respect,
 But here 'twas more—it reverence inspired—
 In deferential attitude I stood,
 When thus to me the venerable man :
 “ Presuming mortal that desirest to learn
 Those mysteries to all his kind denied—
 That seeks a knowledge of that vague futurity
 Through which he's taught th' immortal soul exists
 In pain or pleasure, as a lifetime's deeds,
 Judged by the world's Creator, shall decide,—
 I've heard thy wish and knowing it to be
 Prompted by no unhallowed desire,
 Nor offspring of idle cur'osity ;
 But emanating from profound regard
 For the Supreme and all his wondrous works,
 In part I'll grant it thee, so turn, with mine
 Thy footsteps whither I will thee conduct.”

He turned and with a stately motion of
 The hand, he bade me follow, which I did
 Almost unconsciously ; as though he led
 Me on without an impulse of mine own.
 On, on we moved ; yet no resisting earth
 Sustained the footsteps, but we seemed to glide
 Through th' opaque void, and on its atmosphere,
 (If atmosphere it had) alone to tread :—
 The faint white lustre of my spirit gleamed,
 So strangely bright amid that awful gloom,
 Shining with radiance supernatural.
 At length a pause in our on-gliding course—
 I felt a heaviness within my breast,
 A sense of woe beyond expression drear,
 And seemed to know that I had reached th' abode,—

The doleful regions of the unblest dead :
 A soul depressing influence throughout
 The dismal gloom appeared to reign, and low
 My spirits sank beneath its leaden weight :
 It seemed to quench the light of Hope, and shut
 The bosom 'gainst its cheering ray forever.

" Now have thy wish—vain child of earth behold
 Revealed, the mysteries of that awful world
 Where those who have incurred the just displeasure
 Of an offended God, in anguish live forever."
 Thus said the venerable one who stood
 Beside me, and as sternly fell the words,
 Yet with soft accent, from commanding lips,
 A dull, faint glimmer lit the dismal shade
 With ghastly hue, and pale ; like when the flash
 Of lightning cleaves the midnight tempest's clouds ;
 And frightened Nature for an instant gleams
 All wan and blue in th' unearthly glare :
 'Twas light, if light it could be called, that made
 The gloom more palpable ; and though the eye
 Beheld obscurity discovered, yet
 'Twas darkness desolate and awful still.
 But dreadful was the sight revealed unto
 My shrinking gaze, by that unnatural light :
 Unnumbered beings, as distinct in form
 As that they wore on earth, were gathered there,
 But with despondence such as never earth
 Beheld, upon the ghastly features stamped,
 And each crushed spirit bending 'neath the load
 Of hopeless misery that filled the breast—
 No sulphurous flood whose rolling waves of flame

Inflicted on the ne'er consuming damned
 Its agonies, was there, nor with pale light
 Lit up the dreadful gloom ; but in its stead
 Darkness incomprehensible sole reigned
 With Silence still more terrible than gloom—
 No wild distortions of the anguished face,
 Like when corporeal pangs pervade the flesh,
 Were there—no, different far the countenance :
 A fearful melancholy from the eye
 Looked forth, and more than words could tell, bespoke
 The desolation of the soul within :
 All there was gloom—despondency—and huge
 Amidst the darkness, and with haggard cheek,
 And outspread wings, the demon of Remorse,
 Engendering woe, hung ghastly o'er the scene.

“ Can these be beings who once lived and moved
 In yon far earth,—whose joyous natures swelled
 With all those ardours passionate, and hopes
 That through exultant manhood's bosom thrill—
 Careless and glad as though the spark of life
 Would linger in their vital dust forever ? ”
 In trembling, doubting accents thus I asked.

“ Yes, child of earth, dispel thy feeble doubts—
 These are the souls—immortal essences
 Of those who once on earth, as thou wilt yet,
 Their term of wretched happiness fulfilled—
 The poor, the lowly—the high-born and proud
 Who gloried in the goodness they had
 Of nature's giving—weak'st pride of all,
 The pride of beauty and of grace of form—

What art thou flesh—and man? Go ask the grave,
 And in its silence find thy sad reply.—
 All, all are here—creatures on whom the light
 Of Reason shone,—blessed with a sacred guide
 To truth and life eternal, and yet braved
 Their Maker to his worst by scorning all
 His stern injunctions, and his proffered love
 Forfeited by excess of evil deeds.”

“ Just fate, yet sad. But are these torments all
 That they must suffer—where those dreadful flames
 In which we’re told the wicked expiate
 Their wretched doom in never ending pain? ”

“ What ! thinkest thou, material pangs inflict
 More torture than that deep remorse of mind—
 A ceaseless canker gnawing at the soul,
 That fearfully the quickened conscience goads?
 No ! No !
 Pain would be welcomed as companionship
 In this drear place—as something to divert
 The mind from silent brooding o’er its woe :
 Besides these essences are senseless to
 Such things as rack the living flesh with pain ;—
 Corporeal suffering became extinct
 In them when closed the dark grave o’er their dust.
 This world of outer darkness is their fate,
 Stung with remorse—here conscience ever heaps
 Reproach and agony upon itself—
 This, this their doom and what more terrible ? ”

I shrank from contemplation of the scene ;
 And yet, as if by fascination bound
 My gaze still wandered sorrowfully o'er all,
 Until, at last, it fixed itself upon
 Two forms that sat dejectedly apart
 From all the rest, and these, alas ! seemed doomed
 To suffer under more than common curse :
 Such deep despondence and excess of woe
 And mental agony as was impressed
 Upon each haggard countenance, is far
 Beyond the weak conception of humanity
 To picture to itself. A mute despair —
 A settled hopelessness the dull eye fixed
 On vacancy, as if the wrecked soul knew
 No sunny gleam of a redeeming hour
 Would e'er dispel the cloud of wrath that hung,
 With vengeance 'pregnated, o'er it so fearfully.
 Even he, whose light of Reason is obscured,
 The child of Melancholy at his grated bars,
 Gazing the livelong day, with leaning head
 And vacant eyes, upon the world without,
 Unconscious all of Nature's fair existence :
 The proud fields robe them in their green attire,
 The glad trees rustle in the summer breeze,
 The sunshine glistens, and the misty hills,
 Dim in the distance, look the same as when
 They once had filled his childhood's wondering mind
 With fancies strange — now all their charms are spread
 In vain to wake emotion in his mind —
 He sees — but there his apprehension ends —
 Even his sad eye with eloquence of thought,
 Compared with those on which I gazed, was filled :

Their's was the woe compassion could not find
 A vulnerable point to touch, and soothe
 With kindly sympathy of word or deed—
 Disdaining sympathy, th' o'erpowering grief
 Looked not beyond itself, as if it sought
 For consolation only in despair.
 Long, long, I gazed abstractedly, my thoughts,
 On some indefinable dread intent,
 Wandering I knew not whither—till at once,
 With impulse sudden, to my guide I turned,
 And, fearing the reply, I timorous asked ;—
 "How long hath this existence drear to last,
 Till vengeance of th' Eternal one be satisfied ?"

"How long !
 Throughout Eternity—a space of time
 Too vast for man's poor comprehension to
 Encompass. Take the largest numeral ;
 That ingenuity of man has called
 Into existence to assist him in
 His calculation of vain theorems
 And speculations difficult, abstruse,
 Which number multiplied into itself
 Ten thousand times, the monstrous sum in years
 Would show the end no nearer than before :
 Kingdoms may change—earth's dynasties may pass
 From recollection of mankind—even earth
 And all the glories of creation by
 Some fierce convulsion of the elements,
 May be dissolved—returning to the Night—
 The chaos whence the Supreme called them forth,

But the immortal soul in being strange—
Incomprehensible—exists forever."

I shuddered as he spoke—an icy chill
Crept through my bosom, yet I dared to seek
For further knowledge—pointing to the twain,
In humbleness one more request preferred:—
"What monstrous crime outraging God and man
Have these committed that they should incur
A Retribution terrible as this?"

"The tale is not o'er long,—'twill soon be told.—
This one, decrepit not with gathered years,
But care, ere manhood's prime of days were reached—
The crime, beneath whose penalty he groans,
Is still the bent, in yon revolving sphere,
Of thoughtless thousands, and yet deemed no crime:
The world's outcry against the petty felon,
Is raised aloud for some slight injury
Done to his fellow-man (who might, perhaps,
Be guilty of the same misdeed, were but
Their circumstances or conditions changed,)
And justice hounds him even to the death,—
Her righteous claims must all be satisfied;
But crimes against the God of Heaven and Earth,
Upon whose favor man's existence hangs
From day to day, are treated with contempt,
Or gazed upon with half approving eye.
This one the slave of sordid passion lived—
The lust of gain the ruin of his soul;
And he with unremitting toil wore out
His manhood's vigour striving to amass

The glittering hoard, whose full extent would now
 Be gladly given for a day's respite
 From this tormenting agony of mind,
 And deem the favor purchased far too cheap ;—
 The morn beheld him early at his toil,
 The night's dull taper with its tufted wick
 And flickering, smoky flame, beheld him bent,
 With countenance impressed with covetousness
 And mean desire, over the inky page,
 Eagerly pondering on the past day's gains.
 And thus day after day, year after year
 Beheld a repetition of the same
 Unvarying round, save that the mind grew more
 And more absorbed in his increasing wealth
 And treasured store—and to all else without
 Its magic circle, negligent and cold :—
 Wrapped in his treasure, he forgot that e'er
 A Deity existed who controlled
 The destines of man—that all he had
 Was from His great munificence received—
 He knew no shrine but Mammon's to adore ;
 The worshipped idol of his soul was gold,
 And there with mad fanaticism bowed—
 Oh ! would the world but turn their hearts to Heaven,
 And its divine inculcations perform
 To God and man with half such fervor, then
 Earth might be made a Paradise indeed,
 Instead of now a spacious field for strife,
 Contention, enmity to rage upon.—
 He lived alone ; no sympathy he met
 From fellow beings : yet the vulgar paid
 A deferential tribute to his gold ;

Affection for his race ne'er warmed his heart
 With kindly glow—his heart had long become
 As cold, unfeeling as his senseless ore :
 The springs of charity that therein rise,
 Dispensing kindnesses of word or deed,
 As thence in full stream of benevolence
 They sweetly flow, filling the donor's soul
 With glad emotion, self-approving joy
 At having brought a gleam of sunshine to
 Some spirit desolate and wrung with woes,
 Were all dried up, (as is the meadow's stream
 By summer's sun, leaving the pebbly bed
 All hard and bare,) by his absorbing love,
 His guilty passion for his treasured gold.
 No ties of kindred nor of that pure love,
 Each generous impulse of the tender soul
 Expanding, bound him in their holy thrall :
 He was a stranger to the fervid joy
 That thrills in silence thro' the raptured breast,
 Responding to another sweet chord, when
 The warm affection of a love filled heart
 Showers its o'er-brimming ecstasies upon it ;
 Alas ! he knew not what it was to have
 The fond affection of another heart
 Twining with eagerness around his own
 And opening fountains of some new sweet bliss
 Each hour and minute all unknown before.
 He cared not for the sympathy of man
 Beyond what brought some increase to his hoard,
 Nor cared he for his God ; for where there is
 No love for man, there is no love for God.

At length o'er wearied nature could withstand
 Such anxious care no longer, and succumbed
 To the incessant toil ; and yet with age
 Came no reversion of his former state ;
 The gathering years, that sage reflection bring,
 With their accumulation, to the mind,
 Dropped noiselessly upon him ; yet they wrought
 No healthful change. He grieved to forsake
 The scene whereon he long had played a part
 So miserable ; and now his only joy
 Was contemplation of his ill-got gains
 In selfish solitude, unseen, unknown.
 And there, with wild insanity of eye,
 He'd hang enraptured o'er the glittering heap
 Whose fascination often brought forth tears
 Of base delight, as if the shining adamant
 Found sympathy with his own sordid soul.
 The wretched mendicant with pale, pinched cheek,
 Expressing poverty, and want, and woe,
 An humble pittance asking at his hands,
 Was thrust uncharitably from his door,
 Nor granted of his great abundance ought :
 'Twould wring his heart with anguish to behold
 The smallest atom from the treasured heap
 Detached for even purpose necessary—
 And yet the instrument that damned his soul,
 Another's from perdition might have saved.
 At last amidst his selfishness Death came,
 With summons unavertible, and called
 For that which soon or late is by him claimed
 Ah ! then the tumults strugglings in the breast
 Of the inexorable tyrant's victim ;

His love of life, and his still more than life—
 The treasure idolized beyond aught else
 Were the chief burden of his sordid grief:
 He mourned for an extension of the span
 Of days allotted him, and yet for what?
 To bring fruits worthy of repentance? No;—
 But that he might further communion hold
 With his bright treasure—and the sorest pang
 'Neath which he suffered, and that filled his mind
 With anguish, was that he must go and leave
 All, all behind: he thought not of his soul;
 That treasure, in comparison, was small
 With that in which his bosom was bound up—
 At length in splendid poverty he died,
 The sordid wretch that he had ever lived—
 Unmourned, and a reproach unto his kind."

"This next, though born in poverty obscure,
 The lamp of Genius at his natal hour
 Shone bright and o'er him cast its hallowed ray:
 Imparting its divine influence to
 The quickened soul:—and yet the Destinies
 That predispose the fate of mortals born
 Into the world, wept tears of unfeigned woe
 While glancing o'er the melancholy part
 Allotted him to play upon life's stage:
 The one bestowed on him the blessed source
 Of many a fount of pure and holy joy—
 The others meted him a cup of gall—
 Sad dispensation, yet who dare impeach
 The acts of an unknown, mysterious Power,
 Or seek with impious reasoning to slur

Decrees inscrutable to all but Heaven.
 He grew in stature as the years sped on,
 And understanding far beyond his years:
 While yet a boy, on opening manhood's verge,
 (As tinted morn precedes the golden day)
 He loved the solitude where Nature reigned,
 In rugged pomp, sole mistress of the scene.
 And, swayed by her mysterious influence,
 To hold communion with himself alone.
 He loved to roam the unfrequented wood,
 And list in wonder to the unseen breeze
 Æolian music making wild and sad
 Among the hoary branches overhead:—
 The fabled tree whose melody refined
 Woke exquisite sensations of delight
 Within the listner's breast, would not have stirred
 Th' unsounded depths of his young soul, like this
 Wild forst harmony,—unmeasured—strange.
 The mountain vale, where the out-jutting rocks,
 Frowning terrific'ly in mid-air hung,
 Destruction threatening to all beneath,—
 Where twilight's sombre shadows lingered e'er,
 Nor felt the influence of noon-day's glare,
 And scarce a visitant of life beheld,
 Unless the swooping eagle as she sped,
 In flight majestic, to her craggy nest,
 A fond resort was also, and there oft
 With rapt devotion unto Nature's God,
 He felt his bosom thrill. The rushing stream
 With flood tumultous sweeping past its shore,
 Enchained his spirit with a mystic spell:
 Upon its shelving banks in thoughtful mood,

Wand'ring through some ideal world,—with oft
 A restless spirit flashing in his eye,
 Yet softened by a melancholy tinge
 It constant wore, he'd sit for hours and gaze
 Upon the torrent glancing swiftly by:—
 One favorite spot was where the leaping waves
 Instinct with life, each other fiercely chased
 In gambols wild, and where the noisy stream
 Updashing 'gainst the fixed rocks that opposed
 A mimic barrier to its onward course,
 Formed curved jets of sportive snowy foam:—
 There gazing on the troubled flood, its roar
 Would touch the keys to contemplation's chords
 And wake reflection in his thoughtful soul.
 He lov'd with all the fervor of his breast
 The starry solitude of midnight's skies,
 When shining worlds, innumerable, *looked*
 Their all Omnipotent Creator's praise,
 And their eternal lumination burnt
 With holy zeal, in silence, to his Power.
 The soothing influence of the hallowed hour
 Then fell upon his spirits, like its dew
 Upon the slowly opening night-flowers,
 A nourishment to pure and holy thought:
 Far, far, from earth his soar'ng mind should wing
 Its flight ideal—oft 'twould gaze beyond
 The spangled beauty of the dark profound,
 And there in raptured visions would behold
 Th' undying glory of Creation's Lord,
 (And yet the picture, dazling with all
 The profuse glories that unbridled thought
 Could add to its magnificence, fell far

Behind the bright invisible reality ;
 For mind of man ne'er had conception of
 The blaze of splendor round Jehovah's throne,)
 Vague phantasies—yet such imaginings were
 Ever to him a source of strange delight.
 He felt a holy, reverential awe
 For all the grandeur that he saw displayed
 In the arched firmament of gorgeous night,
 And bowed in humbleness of soul before
 A Power so vast as could create control
 The revealed wonders of the Universe :
 Still not a stranger was his bosom to
 The milder inspirations of such Power :
 Descending from its airy flight, his soul
 Could take devotion's tinge from objects less
 In nature than the glory of the skies
 And grander portions of the Universe.
 The still and echoing Sabbath morning when
 All nature seems to feel there is a God—
 Not nature only but the dingy town,
 From noisy labor resting, and the hum
 Of busy life, then steeped in peaceful quiet,
 Can also feel its sacred influence,
 And by a hallowed silence show its praise—
 This, too, could touch those tender, fervent chords
 With which his breast was strung—nor needed he
 A wordy monitor with ready lip
 And zealous will, to wake devotion in
 His breast—instinctively devotion came
 From all he saw ; for he therein beheld
 The interference of some mighty hand
 Invisible, yet powerful and wise.

The solemn chiming of the Sabbath-bells,
 Stately and slow, was ever heard by him
 With melancholy, and emotion sad.
 Within the sacred edifice of prayer,
 He loved to listen to the texts divine
 Expounded by some servant of the Lord :
 And though around him tilled wealth were ranged,
 Their vanities paraded even there,
 Not one amongst them such devotion felt
 As that which gushed to his own humble breast ;—
 And when the lab'ring organ's measured peal,
 Rose with grand swell and filled the vaulted aisle,
 As if on its vibrating strains, aloft
 The adoration of assembled hearts
 Was borne unto the Mercy-seat of Heaven,
 He felt an ecstasy of rapt delight—
 An undefined thrill of something strange,
 Yet sweet, tumultuously his bosom sweep.
 His nature was of an ideal cast,
 Nourished by contemplation of the real,
 And feeling sympathy with all he saw
 In earth or sky ; for all things were by him
 Endowed with some peculiar charm and grace—
 Delighting mostly in the mystic realms
 Of his creative fancy, and too mild—
 Too gentle for collision with the rude
 And sterner stuff of which yon world is made
 He grew to manhood ; but the wintry hand
 Of poverty ever upon him pressed,
 And rudely pinched both body's yearnings and
 Th' aspiring thought's that mounted in his soul—
 His worth unnoticed—Oh ! too often worth

Is treated with contumely and despised
 Because the humble garb of poverty,
 Like basest dross around the virgin gold,
 A mean disguise, conceals the sterling ore :
 'Tis hard to be forever straining under
 Such sad oppression ; and the dreams that Hope
 Conceived to cheer the laborer in his toil,
 Dissolving with the slow advance of Time,
 (Deceptive visions) one by one away :
 The breast that's felt the stings of poverty,
 Can doubly thrill with gratitude to Him,
 And to his agent that has wrought him good
 And scared the mocking demon from his door.—
 Brooding o'er disappointments he became
 A prey to melancholy, and in temper soured :
 He lived but in himself, and strove to shun
 All intercourse with creatures of his kind ;
 For self-persuasion nourished his belief
 That human sympathy was a thing that dwelt
 But in the fancy of some foolish breast :
 A nature far too sensitive to slight,
 Allowed him not to buffet such rude storms
 As every where beset the path of life,
 With sturdy arm : but shrank as tenderly
 From contact with them as the feeling plant
 That folds its petals at the slightest touch.

A passion for the beautiful—the grand
 In nature and its solitude, still reigned
 Predominant within his breast,—but now
 He was a being differing from all
 That former self that in the abstract viewed

With glad emotion a deep hidden source
 Of wisdom, goodness, care, in all he saw ;
 Now he beheld with superficial glance,
 Yet warm and ardent as his boyish love,
 Only th' effect—the palpable display,
 Nor ventured e'er a thought upon the cause :—
 The dark viscissitudes of life concurred
 To impregnate his bosom with harsh thoughts
 'Gainst man—and Heaven's unquestionable decrees—
 Maturing Reason had perverted grown,
 And weighed, in bitterness of soul, his lot
 With prejudicial and reproachful thought ;
 His judgment, tempered with no kindness, looked
 On all things with uncharitable eye,
 And thence erroneous estimates inferred.

Oppressed with sorrows fanciful and real—
 Alas ! too real ! for pondering on these
 To giant magnitude the others reached—
 He, day by day, more melancholy grew,
 Reserved and solitary—shunning all
 That bore the semblance of humanity,
 And then to 'scape the burden of his woes,
 The weak altern'tive of an o'er-strained mind,
 His hand insane against himself he raised,
 And branded with self-murder—vilest stain—
 He rushed into the presence of his God."

He ceased—oppressive silence once more reigned
 Throughout that dismal region ; yet I wished
 To know still further of the scene I saw—
 Man's mind unsatisfied is ever straining
 For knowledge farthest from its anxious grasp ;

Yet once obtained, tis but a bauble thought :
 Possession robs the object of its charm—
 And as the words were even on my lips
 To beg another boon, the scene was changed—
 All, all as instantaneously as thought
 Had disappeared—I was again alone
 Within the Cemetery of the dead,
 Reclining on a sloping grassy mound,
 The diamond sprinkled canopy of night
 In dark magnificence above me spread,
 And silent as the slumber of the grave,—
 A soft, still breeze passed whisperingly by
 And woke a mournful cadence in the palms
 And cypress trees that reared their aged tops
 Far into the obscurity of night—
 There pondering over what I had beheld
 In dreams,—I sighed to find the vision gone.

.

